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Nov. 6, 1999  
Contact: Bob Daley or Teri Rizvi  
rizvi@udayton.edu

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### **NEWS RELEASE**

#### **SCHOLARS TO PRESENT PAPERS ON HUMOR IN FAMILY AND DAILY LIFE, PLACE ERMA BOMBECK'S WORK IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

DAYTON, Ohio — On April Fool's Day, scholars will gather at the University of Dayton to present papers on popular American humor and place the work of Erma Bombeck, one of America's most treasured popular humorists, in historical context.

"A lot of columnists write to end up in the Congressional Record or at the Pulitzer committee's door," observed Ellen Goodman, but "Erma Bombeck went us all one better. Her words won her the permanent place of honor in American life: the refrigerator door."

The academic symposium is one feature of the Erma Bombeck Conference on Popular American Humor, to be held at the University of Dayton March 29-April 1. Part of UD's sesquicentennial celebration, the conference includes a keynote address by Art Buchwald, a writers' workshop, a creative writing competition and the official transfer of Erma Bombeck's papers to the University of Dayton.

Symposium plans call for a series of presentations in the morning followed by concurrent, two-hour workshops on humor and healing and humor in the classroom in the afternoon. Following lunch, a panel will discuss the work of Erma Bombeck in the context of popular American humor.

The schedule for the symposium's morning sessions includes papers titled:

- "Pop-Up Parenting: What a Postmodern Mother Owes to Erma Bombeck" by Karen Erickson of St. John's University, Collegeville, Minn.;
- "Spouting Venom: Mrs. Parker and the New Woman" by Jason Bunch of the University of Dayton;
- "The History of the Twentieth-Century Housewife Humorist" by Penelope Fritzer and Bartholomew Bland of Florida Atlantic University;
- "Erma's Friends Tell All: The Place of Erma Bombeck's Work in a Women's Studies Curriculum" by Betty Youngkin of the University of Dayton;
- "What's So Funny? Feminism, Catholicism and Humor in American Women's Literature" by Jeana DelRosso of the University of Maryland; and

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300 College Park Dayton, Ohio 45469-1679  
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- “Couch to Nowhere: The Domestic Deadpan of Roz Chast” by Carol Magary of Brevard Community College, Cocoa, Fla.

Concurrent workshops in the afternoon will complete the conference. They are “Humor, Health and Healing” to be conducted by Jephtha Hostetler of Ohio State University and “Professors Are from Mars, Students Are from Snickers: How to Write and Deliver Humor in the Classroom and in Professional Presentations” by Ron Berk of Johns Hopkins University.

The academic symposium is co-sponsored by University Libraries and UD’s departments of English and communication. Registration is \$75 for symposium participants. Some complimentary registrations will be available to UD students.

For three decades, Bombeck celebrated the extraordinary in the ordinary and chronicled life’s absurdities in a syndicated column carried by 700 newspapers prior to her death of kidney disease in 1996. She credited the University of Dayton with preparing her for life and work, for making her believe she could write. She graduated in 1949 with a degree in English and never forgot that she got her start as a writer at the University of Dayton.

Bombeck gave back to the University in numerous ways. She served on the board of trustees from 1984 to 1987; co-chaired with her husband the National Alumni Challenge Campaign during the University’s capital campaign in the 1980s; spoke at events on campus, including a writers’ workshop; and participated in advertising and direct-mail campaigns to help broaden the University’s image and recruit students. In 1981, she received an honorary doctorate from UD and she was named an honorary trustee in 1988.

The project is co-sponsored by the board of directors of UD’s National Alumni Association; the public relations committee of the National Alumni Association; University Libraries; department of English; department of communication; alumni relations office; public relations office; *Dayton Daily News*; Amos Suburban Newspapers; Washington-Centerville Public Library; Books & Co.; ActiveDayton.com; WYSO-FM; and WHIO-TV.

For information, e-mail [erma@udayton.edu](mailto:erma@udayton.edu) or call Ed Garten, symposium organizer, at (937) 229-4265. Visit [www.activedayton.com/entertainment/erma](http://www.activedayton.com/entertainment/erma).